

United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Security Council, concerned over "recent deteriorating situation" in Georgia, supports Secretary-General's decision to send high-level mission to that country; calls on all parties to cease fighting and observe Moscow agreement of 3 September.
- + Co-Chairmen of International Conference on the former Yugoslavia to travel to Moscow tomorrow for talks with Russian Foreign Minister, and possibly with President Yeltsin.
- + On last day of general debate, General Assembly is addressed by Prime Ministers of Fiji and Vanuatu; Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea; last night Assembly heard statements by Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea and Chairman of Delegation of Comoros; total of 167 speakers addressed Assembly during three-week general debate.
- + Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes creation of Commission on war crimes; says "prosecuting guilty and exonerating innocent" important for peace and reconciliation in that country.
- + Security Council agrees to add Spain and United States to list of Member States contributing troops to United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia as part of enlargement authorized by Council mid-September.
- + Norodom Sihanouk, President of Supreme National Council of Cambodia, deplores press reports citing "bad situation" in that country and delay in implementation of Paris Agreements; says peace throughout the Khmer land is real.
- + United Nations Environment Programme says deal to ship hazardous waste to Somalia has been cancelled.
- + Second Committee is told spirit of Earth Summit in Rio is "already fading away".

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+ Sixth Committee approves draft text seeking broader adherence to Protocols Additional to 1949 Geneva Conventions on protection of victims of armed conflicts.

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The Security Council, concerned over the recent "deteriorating situation" in Georgia, has expressed support for the Secretary-General's decision to send another mission to that country, in response to a request by the Georgian Government. The mission will be headed by an Under-Secretary-General, who will be accompanied by members of the Secretariat, some of whom will remain on the spot.

According to a Presidential statement read out by Council President Jean-Bernard Merimée (France), the Council endorses the mandate proposed by the Secretary-General in his letter of 7 October. Council members said they looked forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General upon the return of his mission from Georgia. The Council is prepared to consider the recommendations that the Secretary-General plans to submit to it, concerning the contributions which the United Nations could make to the implementation of the Moscow agreement of 3 September.

The Council noted that the current Chairman of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) intends to dispatch a mission to Georgia in the near future and underlines the need to ensure coordination between the efforts of the United Nations and those of the CSCE aimed at restoring peace in the region.

The Council called on all the parties to cease the fighting in Georgia and to observe the terms of the Moscow agreement which affirms that the territorial integrity of Georgia shall be ensured, which provides for the establishment of a cease-fire, the commitment by the parties not to resort to the use of force, and which constitutes the basis for an overall political solution.

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The Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia -- Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen -- are expected to visit Moscow tomorrow for talks with Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, and possibly with President Boris Yeltsin.

According to a press release issued today in Geneva, the discussions will focus on the Co-Chairmen's current efforts to negotiate a political settlement in the Yugoslav crisis, including a cessation of hostilities and the demilitarization of Sarajevo.

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The general debate of the General Assembly came to a close today as it heard the statement of the Prime Minister of Vanuatu. In the course of its

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three-week debate, the Assembly heard from a total of 167 speakers -- 24 Heads of State, one Vice President, 13 Prime Ministers, 10 deputy Prime Ministers, 103 Foreign Ministers and 16 Chairmen of Delegations.

Tomorrow, the Assembly will meet in plenary to take up item 10 concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization. On Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 September, the Assembly will meet to consider item 93 relating to the World Social Situation, Youth Ageing, Disabled Persons and Family.

Opening the debate this morning, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Sitiveni L. Rabuka, said his country would continue to oppose nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear and other toxic waste in the South Pacific region. He further stressed the importance that his Government attached to the preservation of the eco-system in that region. The countries in the South Pacific welcomed the recent decision by France to suspend its nuclear testing and were greatly encouraged by that country's accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that France will also become a party to the protocol to the South Pacific Nuclear Free-Zone Treaty.

Fiji was also encouraged by the measures being taken by the French Government under the Matignon Accords to provide a framework for New Caledonia's evolution towards self-determination and independence, considering essential that progress be made towards the decolonization of New Caledonia.

Speaking about economic issues, the Prime Minister expressed his country's strong support for the liberalization of world trade, pointing out that Fiji was already committed to giving the smaller Pacific Island Countries in the region duty-free access to its markets for a number of commodities and products.

The Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea, John Kaputin, this morning welcomed France's decision to suspend its nuclear weapons-testing programme in French Polynesia and expressed the hope that this suspension would be permanent. He brought his Government's support to United Nations' involvement in the decolonization of New Caledonia, and expressed hope that the forthcoming mid-term review of the implementation of the Matignon Accords would lead to further progress towards safeguarding the legitimate rights of the Kanaks.

The Foreign Minister also made public the intention of his Government to seek regional support for the appointment of a panel of experts to prepare a practical report, based on experience in diverse countries and on close, critical analysis of possible options, for presentation to the United Nations. Such a document, he said, - which would constitute the economic counterpart to Agenda for Peace - would offer the opportunity to stimulate the exchange of practical ideas and experiences relevant to enhancing and increasing opportunities for economic participation for the benefit of people in developing countries.

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Closing the general debate this morning, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Maxime Carlot Korman, proposed that at this session of the General Assembly, a number of important measures be taken as a follow-up to the Earth Summit. Among these was the establishment of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. Vanuatu hoped that the Commission's Secretariat would be situated in New York, so that all countries would have an opportunity to attend, he said.

Vanuatu believed, as did other States in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), that the decisions made with regard to the site of the Commission's secretariat, the venue of its meetings, its size and its composition would be very critical for the outcome of its meetings. Another important measure of the General Assembly would be to consider as a follow-up to the Earth Summit the proposed Global Conference on Sustainable Development for Small Island States. A meeting of that nature was long overdue, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu said.

Amini Ali Moumin, Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Comoros pointed out yesterday afternoon that the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte was again on the agenda of the General Assembly. He expressed his country's great regret that the problem had existed for 17 years, since Comoros had close links of friendship and cooperation with France. Comoros, he went on, had always preferred dialogue and had obeyed the rules of law in its search for a peaceful solution to the problem, whereas on the French side, no decision had been taken to find a solution. Mayotte was Comorian land and the Comorian Government was determined that it would be reintegrated into Comoros, he stated.

In addition to its policy of economic restructuring, Comoros had begun a democratization process which had led to the adoption of a new constitution on 7 June. In a month, the Comorian people would elect representatives to a National Assembly through regional councils and island governors, he said, calling for the support of the international community.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea, Benjamin Mba Ekua Miko, pointing out that the least developed countries could not repay their foreign debt, recalled that the economic restructuring of his own country had been supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in particular, the World Bank

The economic and financial restrictions imposed on Equatorial Guinea by disparities in the world community had affected this country's ability to provide its citizens with clean drinking water, schools and other needed infrastructure, he went on. Yet the Government had recently been generously supported and assisted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and various non-governmental organizations.

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The Foreign Minister informed the Assembly that his Government had instituted a policy of general amnesty, allowing all Equatorial Guinea exiles to freely re-enter the country and resume all rights of citizenship. His Government would continue to facilitate their voluntary return, he said.

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"Prosecuting the guilty and exonerating the innocent was important to the reconciliation of the peoples in our country", Muhamed Sacirbey, the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, told United Nations correspondents today. The statement came just two days after the Security Council authorized the establishment of a Commission of Experts to examine evidence of mass killings and humanitarian violations in the former Yugoslavia.

Reading from eyewitness testimonials, the Bosnian Ambassador described a number of gruesome abuses against civilians from what he said were reports prepared by non-governmental peace organizations. Punishing individuals who were guilty of war crimes would deter other similar crimes in the Bosnian Republic, he said, adding that refugees and concentration camp victims could be encouraged to return home "if they were certain that war criminals would be apprehended and brought to justice".

Ambassador Sacirbey also urged enforcement of the "no-fly zone" agreed to by all the parties at the London Conference, saying it had not yet been honoured. In view of the "reluctance of the western powers to bring in the troops to escort and deliver relief", Ambassador Sacirbey said he was calling on the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), in conjunction with other countries, including Western Europe, to initiate deliveries of food to the people under resolution 770, (1992) adopted last August.

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The Security Council has agreed to a proposal by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that Spain and the United States be added to the list of Member States contributing military personnel to United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR). The two countries' troops would be part of the enlargement authorized by the Council in mid-September.

According to a United Nations official today, the expanded Force would be made up of four battalions of infantry from Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom. Other contributors would be Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and Norway. General Morillon was still holding discussions with the leaders of the various parties in Bosnia on a number of issues such as security corridors and the site for the headquarters of the expanded Force. Advanced elements of the expanded force (small groups of 10 per country) were arriving in Belgrade this week, the official said.

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Norodom Sihanouk, the President of the Supreme National Council of Cambodia, has expressed concern over press reports describing the situation in

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that country as "bad", causing delay in the implementation "in the field" of the Paris Agreements of last October. The comments were made in a letter to the Secretary-General, containing the text of Prince Sihanouk's statement to the 47th session of the General Assembly, which he is unable to attend.

In his letter, the Cambodian Head of State said that unfortunately, there had been a few violations of the cease-fire, acts of banditry and some cases of murder. In addition, the position adopted by one of the Cambodian factions was increasingly disturbing as was that faction's refusal to join the other factions in implementing the Agreements. But on the whole, peace throughout the Khmer land was no less real and there was no prospect of a return to war in Cambodia. For several months, there had been an unprecedented development of tourism and of the market economy, including an increase in the number of airlines linking Cambodia to the outside world.

With regard to Cambodian refugees in Thailand, the process of their returning was taking place smoothly, the statement said, and they were being reintegrated into the Cambodian society with the help of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Foreign assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia was increasing and the number of embassies and other diplomatic posts in Cambodia was growing, Prince Sihanouk said.

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A deal between two European firms and a national of Somalia for the annual shipment of about half a million tonnes of hazardous waste to that country has been aborted, according to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mostafa K. Tolba.

The environmental body was able to quickly follow up with the Swiss Government after reports that one of its firms was involved in shipping hazardous wastes to Somalia and an investigative mission was sent to the war-torn country to confirm the reports. After conferring with Somali authorities and United Nations staff in Mogadishu, the mission reported that it did not find any conclusive evidence of actual hazardous waste dumping in the area.

Switzerland is a party to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, whereas Italy, the home of the second firm, and Somalia, are not.

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"The spirit of Rio already seems to be fading away and we should not allow it to happen". That view expressed by John Pronk, Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, was heard in the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) yesterday, as the Committee heard from 23 speakers in its continuing debate on the world economic situation.

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Mr. Pronk expressed disappointment at the reticence shown last month at the annual meeting of the World Bank. He criticized its "lukewarm agreement" to give "continuing consideration...to an earth increment for environmental purposes." That was not the commitment made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), he said.

Also yesterday, the Committee heard from Ambassador Jorge Montaña of Mexico, who urged the United Nations to launch a campaign to eradicate poverty. Eliminating poverty means not only assisting the most vulnerable population groups, he said, "but also laying the foundations for integrating them into production processes and enabling them to share the benefits of development".

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The General Assembly's Sixth Committee (Legal) this morning approved a draft resolution seeking broader adherence to the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The two 1977 Protocols deal with the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

The draft, which was introduced by Sweden and approved without a vote, would also have the General Assembly call upon present and future parties to Protocol I to consider declaring that they recognize the competence of the International fact-finding Commission established in March of this year to investigate grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I. That Protocol protects victims of international armed conflicts; Protocol II deals with victims of internal conflicts.

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